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MICHAEL AVON OEMING • JOEL THOMAS • BRIAN BOLLAND • PHILLIP HESTER • DAVID HILL

NEGATIVE BURN

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Joe Pruett ~ Editor

VOLUME ONE
NUMBER TWENTY-SEVEN

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story by Larry Hancock and Michael Cherkas
scripted by Larry Hancock
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BAD MORALS ..... Page 10
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created and illustrated by Michael Avon Oeming

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Suburban Nightmares

TM

WE'VE TOLD YOU, WE DON'T WANT YOU GOING NEAR THAT HOUSE!
BUT, DAD—
—WE MEAN IT, DEAR!
MISTER FORD
PART THREE • STORY HANCOCK AND CHERKAS • SCRIPT LARRY HANCOCK
LAYOUTS JOHN VAN BRUGGEN • INKS AND LETTERS MICHAEL CHERKAS
BUT, HE'S SICK! HE NEEDS ME TO DO CHORES FOR HIM!... TO... TO RUN ERRANDS...
NOW, RICKEY, DON'T YOU THINK YOUR STORY IS GETTING A LITTLE OUT OF HAND?
IT ISN'T A STORY!
MOM—TELL HIM!
TELL ME, WHAT?
YOUR FATHER IS RIGHT, RICKEY!

AWWW... YOU'RE ALWAYS TAKING HIS SIDE!
RICKEY! COME BACK HERE.
RICKEY!
OH, LET HIM BE, DEAR. HE'LL BE BACK!
ARE WE DOING THE RIGHT THING, HARVEY?
OF COURSE WE ARE, DEAR. IMAGINATION IS GOOD FOR A BOY — BUT NOT WHEN IT RUNS WILD —
I'VE SEEN HIM, HARVEY. I'VE SEEN MR. FORD!
NO, DEAR, YOU THINK YOU'VE SEEN HIM. IT WAS JUST A TRICK OF THE WIND IN THE CURTAINS —
— UH — I'LL MOVE THOSE MADGE!
HE JUST WANTS SOME ATTENTION.
EXACTLY! —
HUSTLER
— AND WHEN HE DOESN'T THINK HE'S GETTING ANY, HIS STORIES HAVE GOTTEN WILDER AND WILDER!
GIVE ME A HAND WITH THE COUCH, WILL YOU, DEAR?
IT'S JUST GONE TOO FAR. NOW HE'S GOT SOME FOOL NOTION THAT THIS "MR. FORD"..

...IS A SPY! BUT MOM AND DAD WON'T BELIEVE ME... AND MARTY DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF THE MEN...
... IN THE TRUCKS!
I DON'T KNOW EITHER, BUT I GUESS THEY'RE THERE TO KEEP MR. FORD FROM TALKING TO ANYBODY...
NOW I CAN'T TALK TO HIM EXCEPT TO COLLECT FOR THE PAPER!
IT ISN'T FAIR!
SEE, HONEY, NO ONE'S IN THE HOUSE — AND THERE'S NO VAN PARKED ACROSS THE STREET!
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE, HARVEY, I THINK RICKEY IS RIGHT. SOMETHING IS GOING ON!

YOU'LL HAVE TO GET THE }COUGH€ MONEY YOURSELF -IT'S IN THE MID }COUGH€ MIDDLE TIN...
...AND TAKE AN EXTRA FIVE }COUGH€ DOLLARS FOR YOURSELF FOR }COUGH€ ALL THE... HELP...
...YOU'VE BEEN TO ME }COUGH€
GEE, YOU DON'T SOUND VERY GOOD...
...DO YOU WANT ME TO GET YOUR MEDICINE AGAIN?
NO-NO. JUST SIT DOWN... HAVE }COUGH€ HAVE A COOKIE.
YOU'RE A GOOD BOY, RICKEY, YOU'VE BEEN A GOOD }COUGH€ FRIEND AND-AND A BIG HELP TO }COUGH€ ME...
UH... MY MOM SAYS I CAN'T STAY.
...THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT YOU TO }COUGH€ TO DO FOR ME...
UH-I REALLY GOTTA GO.
OKAY... BUT GET YOURSELF A }COUGH€ COKE FROM THE FRIDGE TO TAKE WITH YOU.
GEE, THANKS!
AND DO ME A FAVOUR...
WELL, UH...
NOT NOW-LATER.
JUST REMEMBER- NOT EVERYONE'S WHAT THEY SEEM -GOOD OR BAD...
...AND THERE'S A BIT OF BOTH IN EVERY-ONE, YOU GOT THAT?
YOU GOT ANY ORANGE CRUSH?

SEE YA, MR. FORD!
GOODBYE, RICKEY...
...GOODBYE...
...
HEH-HEH-HEH...
RICKEY! YOUR FATHER COULD STILL USE SOME HELP IN THE BACK!
CAN'T MOM! GOTTA BASEBALL GAME IN TEN MINUTES!

ZZZZZZ... ZZZZZ... ZZZZZ... ZZZNRK!
WAKE UP, HARVEY. TIME TO GO TO BED.
HEY! I WAS WATCHING THAT!
MAKE SURE RICKEY'S BIKE ISN'T OUT FRONT, BEFORE YOU LOCK UP.
YEAH... YEAH— WELL I'LL BE!
THERE IS A VAN PARKED ACROSS THE STREET FROM MR. FORD'S HOUSE!
MADGE!
SSSH... YOU'LL WAKE RICKEY.
BUT I SAW IT, MADGE!
THAT'S NICE, DEAR. NOW COME TO BED.
CLICK!

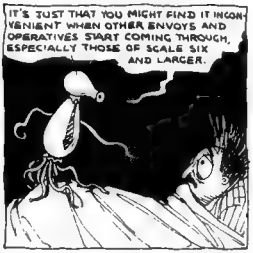
WOOWOOW-WOW-WOOOW-WOOW-WOOWOWOO
BUMP!
ZZZZZ...
THUNK!
..ZZZZZ...
VV-VRROOOM! VV-VRRROOOOM!
"I WAS STILL ONLY TEN WHEN MR. FORD MOVED AWAY..."

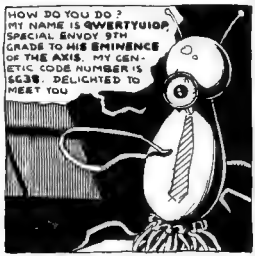
HURRY UP, YOUNG MAN!
YEAH! YEAH! ...JEEZ...
HUH?
?
WHERE'D THIS COME FROM?
IF YOU WANT TO
THAT PAPER RO
GET D
RIGHT
ALRIGHT! ALRIGHT! I'M COMING!
I'LL LOOK AT IT LATER...
...MAYBE...
I SHOT FROM THE GRASSY KNOLL
MEMOIRS OF A GOVERNMENT HITMAN
BY ROBERT FORD
C'MON, SCRAPS, IT'S NOTHING IMPORTANT.

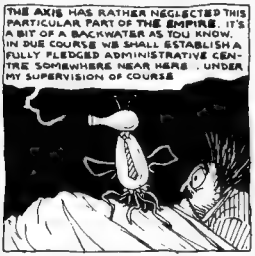
-THE END-

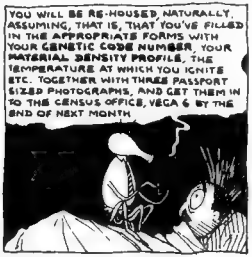
ER
EXCUSE ME

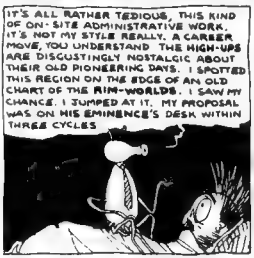
I SAY.. DO YOU REALISE THIS STRUCTURE IS DIRECTLY OVER AN AUTHORISED TRANS-TEMPORAL-HYPER-SPACIAL MATRIX ?


IT'S JUST THAT YOU MIGHT FIND IT INCONVENIENT WHEN OTHER ENVOYS AND OPERATIVES START COMING THROUGH, ESPECIALLY THOSE OF SCALE SIX AND LARGER.

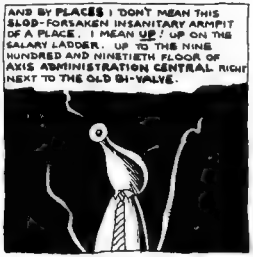

HOW DO YOU DO ? MY NAME IS QWERTYUIOP, SPECIAL ENVOY 9TH GRADE TO HIS EMINENCE OF THE AXIS. MY GENETIC CODE NUMBER IS 5638. DELIGHTED TO MEET YOU


THE AXIS HAS RATHER NEGLECTED THIS PARTICULAR PART OF THE EMPIRE. IT'S A BIT OF A BACKWATER AS YOU KNOW. IN DUE COURSE WE SHALL ESTABLISH A FULLY FLEDGED ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRE SOMEWHERE NEAR HERE . UNDER MY SUPERVISION OF COURSE

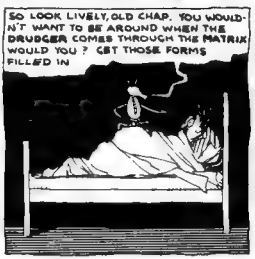

YOU WILL BE RE-HOUSED, NATURALLY. ASSUMING, THAT IS, THAT YOU'VE FILLED IN THE APPROPRIATE FORMS WITH YOUR GENETIC CODE NUMBER, YOUR MATERIAL DENSITY PROFILE, THE TEMPERATURE AT WHICH YOU IGNITE ETC. TOGETHER WITH THREE PASSPORT SIZED PHOTOGRAPHS, AND GET THEM IN TO THE CENSUS OFFICE, VEGA 6 BY THE END OF NEXT MONTH.


IT'S ALL RATHER TEDIOUS, THIS KIND OF ON-SITE ADMINISTRATIVE WORK. IT'S NOT MY STYLE REALLY. A CAREER MOVE, YOU UNDERSTAND THE HIGH-UPS ARE DISGUSTINGLY NOSTALGIC ABOUT THEIR OLD PIONEERING DAYS. I SPOTTED THIS REGION ON THE EDGE OF AN OLD CHART OF THE RIM-WORLDS. I SAW MY CHANCE. I JUMPED AT IT. MY PROPOSAL WAS ON HIS EMINENCE'S DESK WITHIN THREE CYCLES

I THINK THE OLD BI-VALVE WAS QUITE IMPRESSED BY MY YOUTHFUL DRIVE AND VIGOUR. HE SAW IN ME A VOLVOID GOING PLACES!


AND BY PLACES I DON'T MEAN THIS SLOB-FORSAKEN INSANITARY ARMPIT OF A PLACE. I MEAN UP! UP ON THE SALARY LADDER. UP TO THE NINE HUNDRED AND NINETIETH FLOOR OF AXIS ADMINISTRATION CENTRAL RIGHT NEXT TO THE OLD BI-VALVE.

I MAY BURN OUT. IT HAS BEEN KNOWN BUT I'M YOUNG I CAN TAKE THE PACE.


SO LOOK LIVELY, OLD CHAP. YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO BE AROUND WHEN THE DRUDGER COMES THROUGH THE MATRIX WOULD YOU ? GET THOSE FORMS FILLED IN

WHERE DO I GET THESE FORMS ?
THAT'S NOT MY DEPARTMENT

BAD MORALS
"BAD MORALS"...THAT'S WHAT MAMA CALLED IT. MALA MORALES... SOMEBODY'S IDEA OF A BAD JOKE.
BUT THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO AN' I DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TO SAY IN THE FUN ...EVERYBODY LAUGHING BUT ME.
THAT'S ALL CHANGED NOW...BEHIND ME. I STILL KEEP THE GOOD TIMES ROLLING JUST SO LONG AS I DO ALL THE LAUGHING.
YET A GOOD SENSE OF HUMOR WILL ONLY GET YOU SO FAR IN THIS GALAXY. AND THE SPACE LANES ARE CHOCK FULL OF TYPES LOOKING TO TURN A GOOD JOKE. BAD.
STILL, A GIRL'S GOT TO EAT.
WRITTEN BY BRYAN J. L. GLASS
CREATED AND DRAWN BY MICHAEL AVON OEMING
LETTERED BY ROXANNE STARR

MONEY. I NEEDED COLD CASH DUCKETS AND I NEEDED IT FAST.
I NEVER ROBBED ANYONE BEFORE.
BOOTYPALACE
SEX
WELL, NO ONE WHO DIDN'T ASK FOR IT.
IT'S LIKE TAKING CANDY FROM A BABY. IF YOU GOTTA DO IT...
BINGO
DO IT TO THE UGLY ONE.
THEIR LOW-GRADE WEAPONS SCAN COULDN'T FIND MY GUN IF IT WERE GROWING OUT MY ASS.
WHICH T WASN'T
MY NOSE WAS IMMEDIATELY ASSAULTED. IT WAS THE SMELL OF MEN ENJOYING THEMSELVES.
WELL, THAT'S ABOUT TO CHANGE.

WHEN I WALKED INTO THE "PRIVATE" STALL, THIS VATO MAKES A FACE LIKE GOD SENT HIM HIS OWN LATINA ANGEL OF SEX.
EY... MMM...
OH MY MY MMM...
I WANT YOU...
...GOD.
...TO USE YOUR CLEAN HAND TO GIVE ME YOUR WALLET, PUÑETA!
YER PERDY!
HIS MONEY WAS STICKY.
KRAK
BUT SO WAS HE.

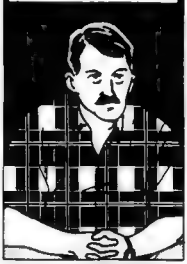
THEN I HEAR THE DOOR LOCK. THERE WAS *SECURITY* A CAMERA WATCHING ME!
I WAIT FOR THE FOOTSTEPS TO GIVE ME A TARGET.
HUMANOID, 150 LBS. FOUR FEET FROM THE DOOR.
HE NEVER EVEN GOT HIS SAFETY OFF.
NO ONE HEARD THE SHOTS OVER THE LOUD MUSIC.
I WAS ABOUT TO HAVE A *FIELD DAY*.

AFTER ROBBING THESE PENEJOS OF MONEY, DIGNITY AND CONCIOUSNESS, I DECIDED THAT THIS FIELD DAY, I TOOK FIRST PLACE...
IN BEING A COMPLETELY GREEDY BITCH!!!
BUT THE DAY COULDN'T BE FINISHED WITHOUT PEEPING THE "FANTASY ROOM."
I DON'T KNOW WHY IT'S CALLED THAT...
BECAUSE MY FANTASY..
HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH BEING SUCKER SLAPPED BY A 300 LB. LEATHER-BOY.
BUT I'M SURE HIS WASN'T HAVING HIS BRAINS USED AS CONFETTI!
I ONLY REGRET GIVING HIM ONE LAST CHEAP THRILL BY DIGGING HIS WALLET OUT OF HIS DIAPERS.
KAWAM
LIKE I SAID... "CANDY FROM A BABY."
I'M HUNGRY... TIME FOR CHEESE-DOGS.

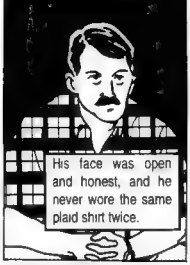
JOHN ROBBINS AND ME

©1995 Stephen Cheng

John Robbins hosted BOOKS FROM COVER TO COVER, a low-budget PBS show intended to introduce children to the wonderful world of reading.

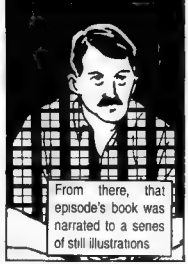


There was an easy, simple manner to John's own brand of public broadcasting.



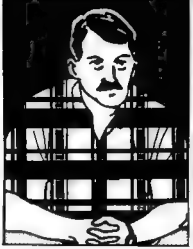
His face was open and honest, and he never wore the same plaid shirt twice.

John would ask a rhetoncal question like "Have you ever had to babysit a younger sibling?" or "Did you ever wish you were perfect?"

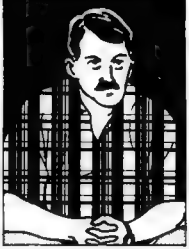


From there, that episode's book was narrated to a senes of still illustrations

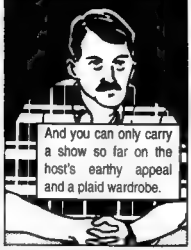
John teased the audience with only part of the story, contrary to the name of the show. Want to know how it ends? Read the book.



I never read the books, but I watched the show religiously

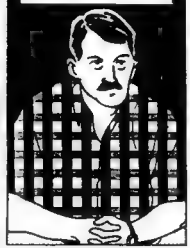


It wasn't because it was a good show, mind you. It lacked direction, pacing, style.

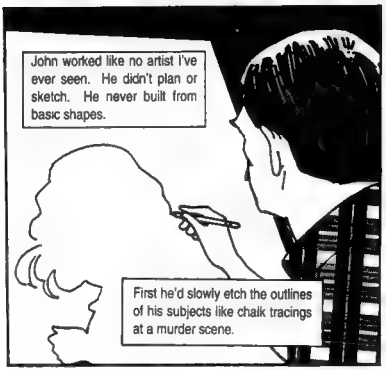


And you can only carry a show so far on the host's earthy appeal and a plaid wardrobe.

What was so fascinating about the show is that between still illustrations, John would grab a colored pencil and actually draw a scene in real time.

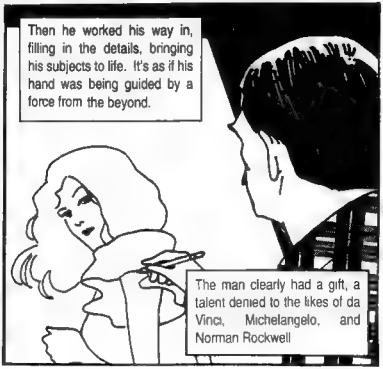


John worked like no artist I've ever seen. He didn't plan or sketch. He never built from basic shapes.

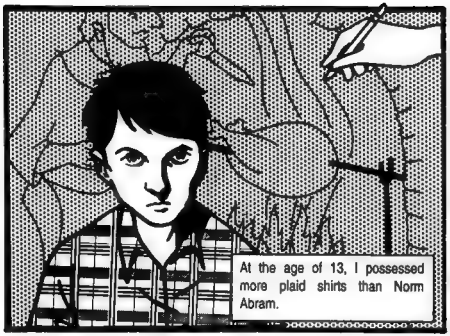


First he'd slowly etch the outlines of his subjects like chalk tracings at a murder scene.

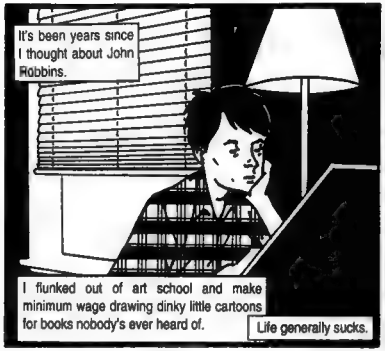
Then he worked his way in, filling in the details, bringing his subjects to life. It's as if his hand was being guided by a force from the beyond.



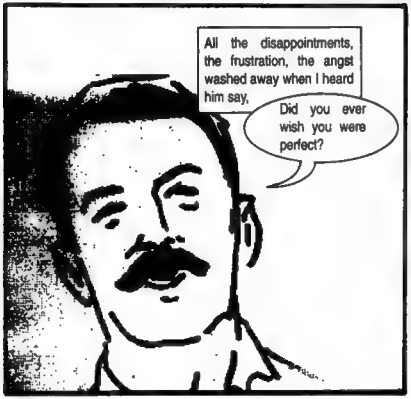
The man clearly had a gift, a talent denied to the likes of da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Norman Rockwell


At the age of 13, I possessed more plaid shirts than Norm Abram.

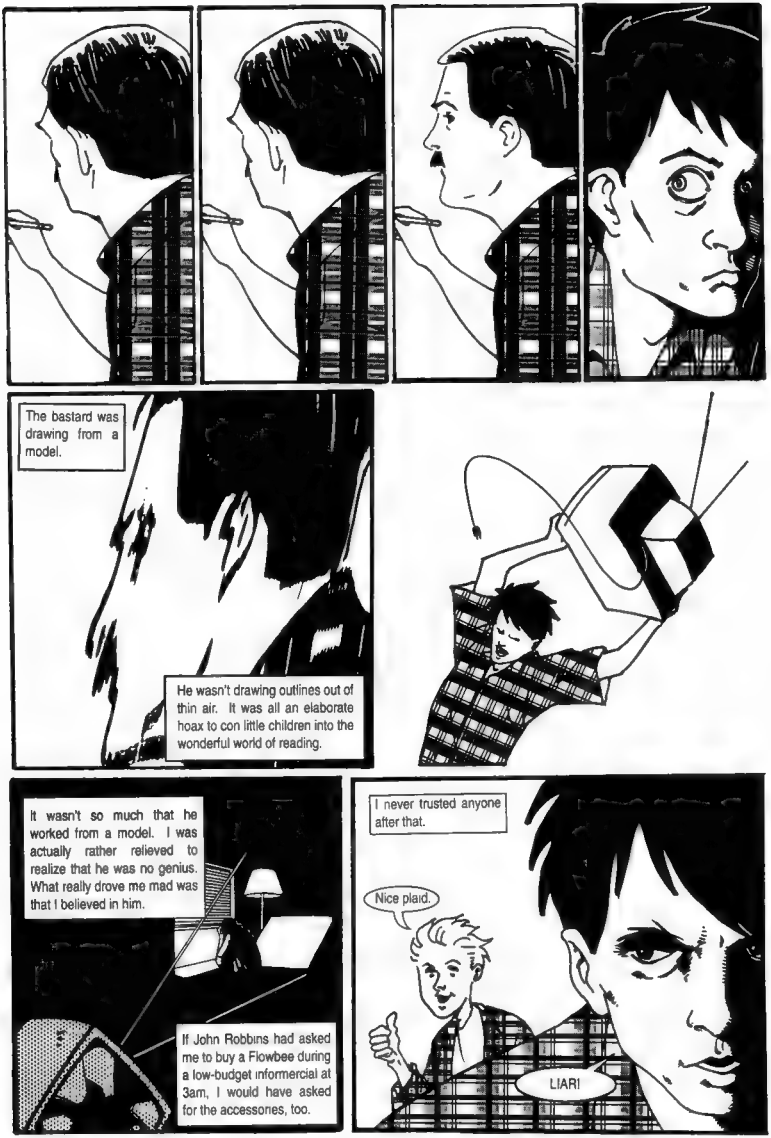
I was going to grow up and be just like John Robbins.


It's been years since I thought about John Robbins.
I flunked out of art school and make minimum wage drawing dinky little cartoons for books nobody's ever heard of.
Life generally sucks.

And one day, I saw BOOKS FROM COVER TO COVER.


All the disappointments, the frustration, the angst washed away when I heard him say,
Did you ever wish you were perfect?

I couldn't turn my eyes away as John began drawing between still illustrations. I followed as his colored pencil glided around the imaginary outlines, slowly made real.
And that's when I saw it.


The bastard was drawing from a model.
He wasn't drawing outlines out of thin air. It was all an elaborate hoax to con little children into the wonderful world of reading.
It wasn't so much that he worked from a model. I was actually rather relieved to realize that he was no genius. What really drove me mad was that I believed in him.
If John Robbins had asked me to buy a Flowbee during a low-budget informercial at 3am, I would have asked for the accessories, too.
I never trusted anyone after that.
Nice plaid.
LIAR!

UNTITLED

COFFEE BREAK
JIM FRIER / WRITER
DAVID HILL / ILLUSTRATOR
ROXANNE STARR / LETTERER
BORING. THAT'S THE BEST WORD TO DESCRIBE THE MIDNIGHT TO SEVEN SHIFT AT A CONVENIENCE STORE.
Bud
DULL, DREARY AND DISMAL ARE PRETTY GOOD, TOO.
UNLESS THE STORE IS SMACK IN THE MIDDLE OF TOWN, THERE'S REALLY NOT THAT MUCH TO DO.
• REC
JUST READ MAGAZINES, SMOKE CIGARETTES AND KEEP A GOOD SUPPLY OF COFFEE ON.
FREE COFFEE
THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO COME IN AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT ARE OBNOXIOUS DRUNKS, HALF-ASLEEP TRUCKERS...
...AND FREAKS

THE FREAKS ARE THE WORST.
STORE
UHHH, CAN I HELP YOU?
'S COLD.
COFFEE'S FREE. IT'S OVER THERE.
QUIK SHOP
GOD, I'M COLD

'S GOOD.
JESUS, THIS GUY'S WEIRD. AND HE SMELLS LIKE HE'S BEEN SLEEPING IN A SEWER.
BEEN WORKING HERE LONG?
AH, CHRIST, NOW HE WANTS TO TALK.
UH UH.

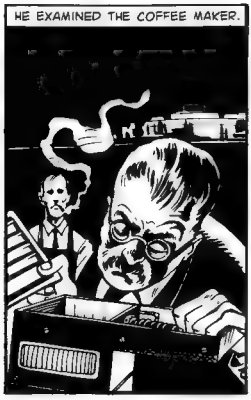
THE WORST THING THAT CAN HAPPEN WITH ONE OF THESE GUYS IS TO GET INTO A CONVERSATION WITH THEM. THEN THEY NEVER WANT TO LEAVE.
DAMN, I'M COLD.
HEY!
OH GREAT. I'LL PROBABLY HAVE TO THROW THAT POT AWAY.
HEY, MAN! YOU CAN'T DO THAT!
I'M COLD, DAMMIT!
I DON'T CARE!
NOW LOOK WHAT YOU MADE ME DO.

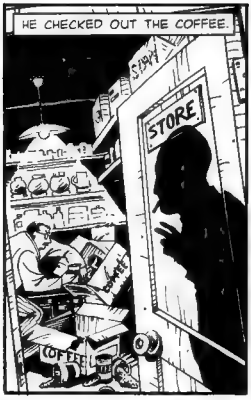
YOU MADE ME SPILL IT!
• REC
I'M GONNA DIE.
ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS GET WARM! BUT YOU DON'T CARE!
'CAUSE YOU'RE ALREADY WARM!
I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO HAVE THE PISTOL...
...BUT WHO CARES?

COFFEE. I SWEAR THAT'S ALL THAT CAME OUT OF HIM.
YOU SON OF A...
THE FREAK WAS A MESS, BUT I COULDN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF THE COFFEE. NO. NOT JUST COFFEE.
I CALLED THE COPS AFTER I GOT DONE PUKING.
STORE

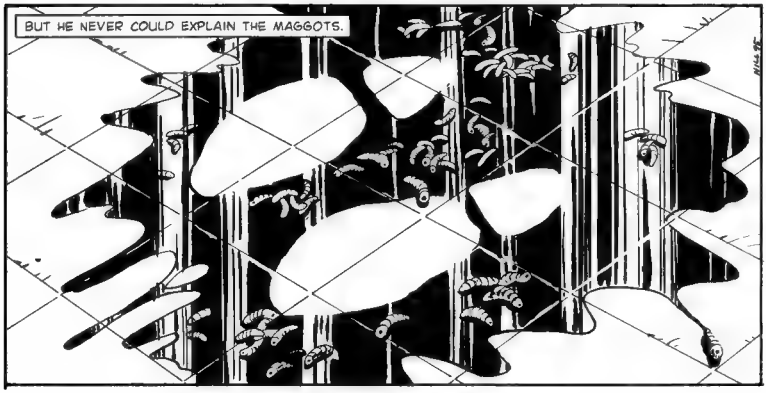
THE CAMERA CAUGHT *EVERYTHING*. THE COPS DIDN'T EVEN CHARGE ME. THEY SAID THEY WOULD BE IN TOUCH AND THEY LEFT. THE STORE MANAGER WAS READY TO FORGET THE WHOLE THING...
•REC

...UNTIL I SHOWED HIM THE COFFEE.


HE EXAMINED THE COFFEE MAKER.


HE CHECKED OUT THE COFFEE.
STORE
COFFEE

HE EVEN CALLED THE COFFEE DISTRIBUTOR.


BUT HE NEVER COULD EXPLAIN THE MAGGOTS.

The Methadone Club

Phillip Hester

i can't sleep without the sound of a fan running.
it makes me think of an airplane flying the propellor kind.
or like the wind that dries out your teeth from riding a motorcycle pretty fast.
every girlfriend i ever had thinks it's stupid to run the fan in the winter time.
they say i'm just trying to recreate my mother's womb.
but i don't remember any of that stuff.

GLASTONBURY, 1995. THE PEACE OF THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE IS SHATTERED BY THE BOWEL-MOVING BASS OF A REGGAE SOUND-SYSTEM, JUGGLERS, DANCERS ..
...ASTRAL HEALERS, CRYSTAL EXPERTS, THE GENTLE PING OF HARE-KRISHNA FINGER-BELLS..
FACE Painting Your choice £1.50p
AMSTERDAM STEVE'S TRIPS
AND THE STEADY DRONING WHINE OF THE POLICE SIRENS.
THERE HAS BEEN A DISTURBANCE. TO QUOTE CASABLANCA, THE USUAL SUSPECTS HAVE BEEN ROUNDED UP. IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO'S GUILTY.
EIGHT PEOPLE THE ONLY THING IN COMMON IS THEIR PREDICAMENT. THE UNSPEAKABLE HAPPENS. THEY TALK, EXCHANGING THEIR STORIES, REVEALING THE VERY DIFFERENT WORLDS THEY LIVE IN.
MAYBE THEY DO HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON AFTER ALL
THE Roadies TALE
THERE WAS SOME DIVE WELL SOUTH OF THE BORDER. I WAS DRINKING MEZCAL, 'CAUSE I 'AD THE NEXT DAY OFF. OZZY AND THE BOYS WERE 'ANG-GLIDIN' OFF THE LOCAL CONVENT; IT'D ALL END IN TEARS.

SCRIPT: *DAVID JACKSON* / DRAWINGS: *PHIL WAGSTAFF*

IN A HAZE OF CAFFEINE AN' RECREATIONAL CHEMISTRY, I THOUGHT I'D GO SHOPPIN' SOMETHING FOR SUNFLOWER AND THE KIDS. IF YOU KNOW WHARRIMEAN.
..NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THESE PLACES...
EVENIN', SEÑOR.
'OW MUCH, POR FAVOR? I'LL GIVE YOU, WHAT, FIFTY PESOS FOR IT...?
I KNOW GEAR.
IT WAS A 1959 FENDER STRATOCASTER, COMPLETELY ORIGINAL. A BEAUTY. STILL HAD THE ORIGINAL SALES TAGS. PLAY IT COOL, I THOUGHT.
FEEFTY PESOS? EES A '59 FENDER STRATOCASTER, SEÑOR. MEENT CONDITION. STEEL HAS THE OREEGINAL SALES TAGS! MADRE DE DIOS!
...YEAH? I HADN'T NOTICED...
EEF YOU ARE ON A BUDGET, PERHAPS THEES IS MORE TO YOUR LIKING.

I KNOW GEAR.
IT WAS A COLORSOUND BLUES. BEST BLOODY EFFECTS PEDAL IN THE HISTORY OF ROCK MUSIC.
HENDRIX 'AD ONE. MUDDY WATERS, ARTHUR LEE, GRAM PARSON, EVEN CLAPTON BEFORE THE M.O.R. SHIT. IT MADE YOU SOUND...WELL, LIKE YOU SOUND ALREADY, ONLY MORE SO. THE BOLLOCKS.
THEY SAY KURT COBAIN EVEN OFFERED TEN GRAND FOR ONE, BUT I KEEP AN OPEN MIND ON THESE THINGS.
A PLEASURE DOING BEESNESS WEETH YOU...
SLY BASTARD WORTH EVERY PENNY, THOUGH
HOW MUCH YOU GOT?
HOW MUCH? HOW MUCH?
IT WAS THE HOLY GRAIL OF THE ELECTRIC GUITAR, AND I 'AD IT. THE POODLE-PERM AND POINTY-'EADSTOCK BRIGADE NEVER KNEW WHAT THEY WERE MISSIN'.
WHEN WAS THE FIRST TIME I 'EARD ONE? OH YEAH. MUSTA BEEN THE ISLE OF WIGHT, 1970. FORGOT WHAT ME NAME WAS, BUT THERE ARE THINGS WHAT STAY WITH YOU.
GALO-Y CARAMELES

LIKE, IF THESE THINGS WERE SO GOOD, HOW COME WE'VE NEVER HEARD OF THEM?
WELL, THE MAKERS MADE ONE *HELL* OF A MISTAKE THEY WERE *TOO* GOOD, SEE? ALL YOU'D NEED WAS THE ONE PEDAL FOR THE PERFECT SOUND NUTHIN' ELSE AN' THEY'D *NEVER* WEAR OUT
IF *EVERYONE* 'AD ONE, THEY'D BE OUT OF BUSINESS IN A YEAR. A BIT LIKE THOSE EVERLASTIN' LIGHT BULBS AN' SHIT
THEY EVEN SAID THERE WERE THESE MEN-IN-BLACK TYPES HIRED BY THE COMPANY TO GET THEM ALL BACK I THOUGHT IT WAS ALL BOLLOCKS AT THE TIME BUT THEN, I WOULD'VE VOTED FOR *NIXON*
CLOSED
SHIT! ME KEYS!
'ELLO ?
I 'EARD SOMETHING IN THE OTHER ROOM. I KNEW I SHOULD'VE BUGGERED OFF THERE AND THEN, BUT YOU KNOW WHAT *MEZCAL*'S LIKE
WHERE IS THE PEDAL, OLD MAN?
I I
IT'S HERE, YOU BASTARDS. JUST LET ME PLAY IT THE *ONCE* AND I'LL BE ON ME WAY
GO, *QUICKLY*.

ONE, BLOODY TWO
THE PERFECT SOUND
THA'S ENOUGH

SOMETIMES IT'S BEST NOT TO QUESTION THINGS. I NEVER SAW ONE AGAIN.
POLICE
THAT MUST'VE BEEN TERRIBLE
YEAH--I MUST GIVE THAT STRAT BACK ONE DAY...

my pain is like an ice pick ~. a red hot ice pick jabbing deep into my lower back ~.
my pain is like a vice grip ~ a red hot, giant vice grip crushing my skull, just behind my eyes ~.
my pain is like a ~. newspaper a red hot, rolled up newspaper smacking my shoulder, again and again ~.
my pain is like a neck tie a red hot, paisley neck tie ~. brushing across my ankle ~.
my pain is like a fat man ~. a red hot naked fat man ~~. slapping his butt cheeks against my arm ~.
:clap:
:clap:
:clap:
:clap:
Erickson ~ Fricke '93

NIGHTVENGER

ATLANTA, GA. 1995.

UNDER A DECAYING CITY. WITHIN ITS FESTERING BOWELS.

IF THERE IS A HELL ON EARTH, I HAVE FOUND IT.

HEADS AND ENTRAILS HANG LIKE TROPHIES. AND THE AIR IS THICK AND WET. IT REEKS OF DEATH.

AFTER A WHILE, YOU GET USED TO THE SMELL.

BLURG

BLURG

OMEGA-MASS, YOU SICK, TWISTED FREAK! NOW IT ENDS! RIGHT HERE, RIGHT...

BELOW THE WATER, NIGHTVENGER'S HANDS BEGIN TO GLOW WITH ENERGY. HIS ARMS LITERALLY VIBRATE WITH POWER. HE FEELS THE CONCRETE AT HIS FEET WARP AND BUBBLE. IT'S WAITING. WAITING FOR HIS...

BUT YOU NEVER LOSE THE MEMORY.

WRITER / MIKE DIGESU
ARTIST / JOEL THOMAS
LETTERER / JOHN WORKMAN

COMMAND!
POWER SURGES THROUGH HIM AS CEMENT SCREAMS OUT OF THE SLUDGE AND SLAMS INTO OMEGAMASS'S EVER-SHIFTING FORM.
THUD!
NOW!
DIE, DAMN YOU! DIE!
BUT, VENGER, IF I DIE...

...YOU WON'T FEEL ANY PAIN!
EAT THIS, YOU UGLY SUCK!
AND I WANT YOU TO FEEL PAIN, VENGER. I WANT YOU TO FEEL EVERY NERVE SCREAM AS I EAT YOUR LIVING HEART.
WITH A THOUGHT, NIGHTVENGER SENDS ELECTRICAL CABLES FROM THE SURROUNDING WALLS FLYING TOWARDS OMEGA-MASS.
GRABBING A WATER PIPE, NIGHTVENGER PAUSES AS HIS SKIN ABSORBS THE PIPE'S MOLECULAR STRUCTURE LIKE A SPONGE. THE CELLULAR MEMBRANES WITHIN HIS HAND AND FOREARM BECOME SATURATED WITH METAL AND SOLIDIFY. THE EFFECT IS TERRIFYINGLY SIMPLE. EVERYTHING BELOW THE ELBOW BECOMES JAGGED, STEEL DEATH.
I NEED A WEAPON. SOMETHING SHARP SOMETHING..
...DEADLY...
I SURE AS HELL HOPE THIS WORKS.
HOW LONG DO YOU THINK YOU CAN HOLD ME WITH THESE CABLES, VENGER?
JUST LONG ENOUGH TO DO...

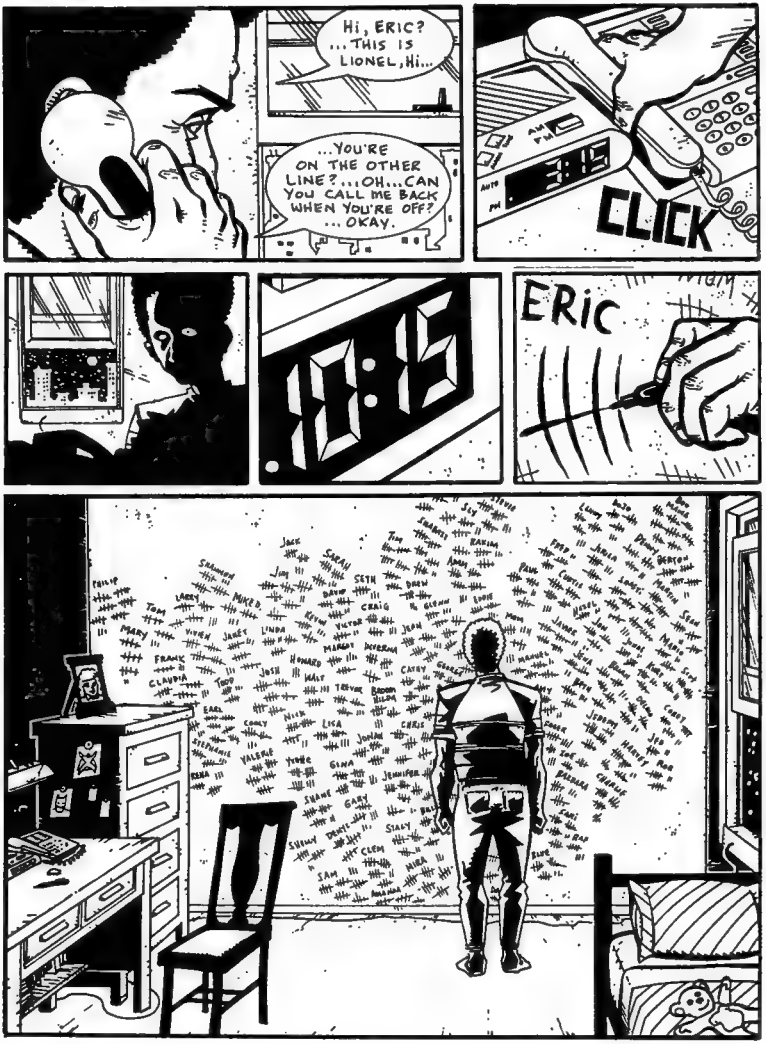
...THIS
SPLURT!!
CONTACT!
KER-
ZAP!
SNAKING POWER LINES FUSE INTO NIGHTVENGER; HIS BODY DRINKS IN ELECTRICITY, BUILDING UP A MASSIVE ELECTRO-DYNAMIC CHARGE. TO RELEASE IT, HE NEED ONLY MAKE...

DAMN! I GUESS I VAPORIZED HIM!
GUESS AGAIN, BUG-EYES!
SUDDENLY HE'S THERE! THEN, INSIDE MY HEAD... UNBELIEVABLE PRESSURE...
BRAIN
EXPLODES!
SHAGGA
...POWER IN MY BRAIN... BUILDING QUICKLY... I FEEL THE SPIRAL BEGIN TO CRACK UNDER THE STRAIN...
...IMMENSE PSYCHIC ENERGY INSIDE MY HEAD... GROWING ...EXPANDING, SUDDENLY MY MIND...
*SENSOR PROCESSING INFRARED AMBIENT LIGHT
BLAM!
NIGHTVENGER'S TELE-STRIKE. A PSIONIC BOLT OF IMMEASURABLE FORCE...

...IT IS AS AWESOME AS IT IS EFFECTIVE
I DON'T KNOW WHO THAT TELESTRIKE HURT WORSE, ME OR HIM. MY HEAD IS POUNDING... MY BODY FEELS SOAKED WITH PAIN.
BUT IT'S OVER. FOR NOW.
THE COPS WILL GET THE USUAL ANONYMOUS PHONE CALL. MAYBE THIS RANCID SUCK WILL GET PUT AWAY FOR GOOD... YEAH, RIGHT.
ATLANTA, GA. 1995.
UNDER A DECAYING CITY. WITHIN ITS FESTERING BOWELS.
OMEGAMASS LAYS BROKEN AND TWISTED IN A HELL HE CREATED. THE AIR IS THICK AND WET... WITH VENGEANCE.
AFTER A WHILE, YOU GET USED TO THE SMELL.
BUT YOU NEVER LOSE THE MEMORY.

LIONEL'S LAMENT

STORY & ART
DEAN HASPIEL



EDITORIAL

Let me tell you that the paper price increases have really been hitting our beloved industry hard. The cost just to print each issue of NEGATIVE BURN—and every other comic—has been skyrocketing this whole year and, as a result, has greatly cut into the profit sharing world of independent comics. I've never been able to pay top dollar to the contributors of NB as it was—it's always been more of a labor of love and support from the creators of NB— but now it's gotten to the point that I have to make a decision. I've been wrestling with having to decide whether or not to increase the price of NB. On the other hand, I've seen how many collectors have been blasting other companies that shall remain nameless for doing just that, so the question remains, "should I do it?" After seeing the last few royalty statements for NB the decision was made for me. If I want to stay in business and keep having the top talent in the field continue to contribute to NB than the answer would have to be "yes, the price is going up."

But I'm doing something different.

Instead of staying pat and keeping the format of NB the same,I'm going to increase the page count of each issue to 64 pages! You see, I've always felt like giving the reader more bang for their buck. I've been doing it in NB since it's incarnation. The first two-issues of NB were solicited as 32-pages comics, but I kept throwing more and more into each issue so that by the time it came out each issue was 48 pages!

But the price remained at $2.95.

Issues three through eight ran at the regular 32 pages an issue, but the comic just didn't feel thick enough to me So starting with issue nine, with the arrival of Alan Moore to our pages, I jacked the page count up to 40 pages.

Still the price remained the same.

I felt pretty content with the format until issue 21 came along. It seemed to me that ads, letters pages, etc. were beginning to take up more and more pages where art should go, so I decided to bump the page count up to 48 pages an issue and guarantee at least 40 pages of story and art per issue.

Still the price remained the same.

Now when the decision was finally made that I was going to have to increase the price of NB I found I just couldn't do it, unless.... I increase the page count once again! Yes, NEGATIVE BURN will now cost you $3.95 each month, but now you get 64 jam-packed pages in each issue! More stories! More art! More of everything than ever before! And if anything, I think it's revitalized NB for the better! In the near future look for stories and art from the likes of Warren Ellis, James Robinson, Mark Badger, Jaime Hernandez, Adam Hughes, Phillip Hester, Brian Bolland, Alan Moore, James A. Owen, Paul Pope, Terry Moore, Moebius, and many more established pros! Plus NB will continue to bring you the best in new talent from the U.S. and abroad! You never know who might be showing up in NEGATIVE BURN!

On a second subject, you might have noticed that ... gasp!... this issue featured a super-hero story, NIGHTVENGER by Michael DiGesu and Joel Thomas. Well, since it's not a common occurrence in these pages I thought I might explain to you what it's all about. Remember Axis Comics? Don't worry, not a lot of people do. Mike and Joel's character NIGHTVENGER was to have been one of the companies first titles (along with my series SEPPUKU with Andrew Robinson and Tim Bradstreet), but the company went belly-up before any of our projects could get to the comic shops. Before the debut of each series we were all asked to do a short "introductory" story for one of their three preview comics (AXIS ALPHA—which I believe was published, AXIS BETA—which this NIGHTVENGER story was to be a part of, and AXIS OMEGA—which my SEPPUKU short was to be included in. Well, BETA and OMEGA never made it out, but our stories were completed and we all suspected would never see the light of day. Then I thought about it. The creators put in a lot of time and produced some good quality work that, up until now, would never be printed, so I figured "why not?" I'm sure there are some readers out there who remember Axis Comics and were actually looking forward to checking some of their series' out, so, for you patient readers, here you go—I present Mike DiGesu and Joel Thomas' NIGHTVENGER. Also, I do plan on running my SEPPUKU short in a future issue, but I'm waiting until I can find the time to do a SEPPUKU project from the good folks at Caliber Comics before I do so. Look for it sometime in 1996.

See ya next month.

Joe Pruett
Editor

letters

Peter de Bruin
Roggekamp 484
2592 VJ The Hague
The Netherlands

Dear Joe,

There are two reasons why I decided to buy NEGATIVE BURN # 23. 1) I've been gradually losing interest in the so-called main-stream superhero comics. It was only a matter of time before my exploration of the independent market would cause me to stumble across NEGATIVE BURN. 2) A number of people whose opinions I value, recommended the book to me. When Roxanne Starr was added to that list of people, I felt obligated to give it a go!

I could give you a story-by-story evaluation of # 23, but I think I'll suffice by telling you what I thought of the book as a whole. Over the past two years, I've been sampling various anthology books from various companies. I discovered that they usually contain very interesting and exciting stories as well as stories that I tend to skip after reading the first page. The lower the percentage of uninteresting stories, the higher my appreciation of the book will be. After reading NB # 23, I concluded that the book contains a wider variety of stories than most other anthologies I've read. Furthermore, I was surprised to find that I had actually read every single page! That, of course, means that I liked all the stories enough to finish them. Short stories alternated with longer ones, stories by famous writers/artists alternated with stories by unknown talent, I must say it's a formula that works for me.

In Holland it is, regrettably, not very easy to come by copies of NEGATIVE BURN, but after reading # 23, I'll do my best to get my hands on future issues!

Well, I'm glad to see that we're still getting new readers with 23 issues out! Welcome aboard, Peter! Say, what is this? An invasion by the Dutch! I just noticed that both letters in this issue's letters page are from The Netherlands. Come on now, are the Dutch the only people who know how to write letters? Let's hear from everyone else out there.

Olav Beemer
Brugakker 36-06
3704 LP Zeist
The Netherlands

Dear Joe,

Funny, actually, NEGATIVE BURN #23 came out three weeks before this year's San Diego Comic-Con and had three of my LOC's printed in its lettercol. Now last year, the issue hitting the stands before the Comic-Con had three letters of mine printed as well! What's this? Coincidence, or is it because you know I'll be coming to San Diego this year again, thinking three printed letters will be enough to satisfy me and keep me from some negative criticisms? You think that ploy will actually work?

Hmm, you know what? You're damn right it works!

But seriously now, NEGATIVE BURN #23 was another surprisingly entertaining issue. Where I thought last issue was one of the best hitherto published, you go and surprise me some more by putting out another great issue. I can hardly remember the time when I last saw an issue that didn't completely please me in all possible ways.

What I especially enjoyed about this issue's features was the fact that most of them had such innovative and rather untraditional premises. Cooper's and Von Grawbadger's "Inosion" is one of the best examples, presenting an intriguing tale with an even more intriguing and very unexpected plot twist near the end. "Mr. Mamoulian" was fascinating as well, in that it laid bare the very foundations of the fundamental differences in religions, yet accomplished that through a very simple metaphor—that of a picture with a bat eating a frog (or was it the other way around, a frog eating a bat?).

Different, but by no means less interesting or off-beat, was the LAST OF THE HERO SOCIETY feature. Although it started out rather straight-forward, it turned out to be anything but that. Not only was this an enjoyable story to read on the surface, it also was a critical look at today's comic book market, probably making the old readers who have been around since the sixties feel very, very nostalgic about the old days when comics cost only a dime. Undoubtedly, this was a fine job by Len Strazewski.

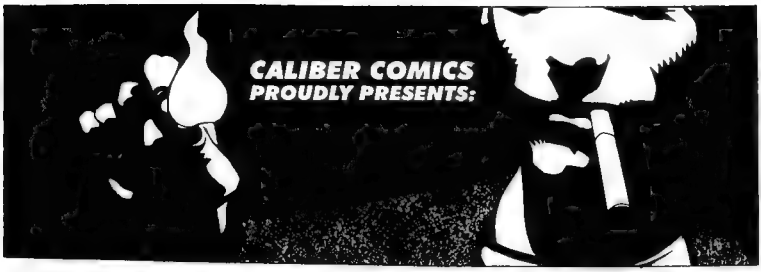
Oh wow, two more features produces by two of my favorite NEGATIVE BURN regulars, Phillip Hester and Greg DiGenti! "The Creep" was plain weird and once more showed that Phillip truly is capable of doing all kinds of different stories, from humor to standard superhero fare to realistic tales to supernatural weirdness. Of course, DiGenti's "Friendless" was as absurd and hilarious as all his previous work. How about a return of "Stubbs the Cat" in these very pages? I, for one, would like that!

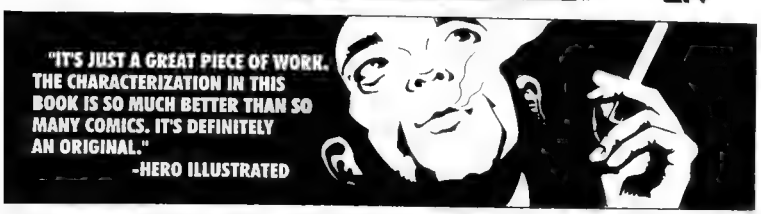
So, great issue again, no doubt about that. Keep up the magic!

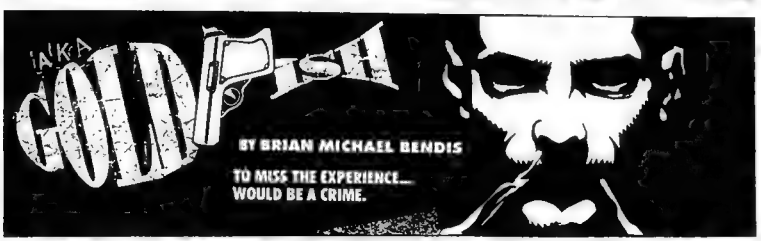
Good seeing you again in San Diego this year, Olav. I'm glad the three letters were enough to pacify you. You ain't seen nothing 'til you've seen an Olav Beemer temper-tantrum! Whew.

So you want to see "Stubbs the Cat" again, hum? Well, was last issue quick enough for ya? Also, look for Phillip Hester's "The Creep" again in issue #29 (November) and maybe even more in '96.

One last thing before I let everyone go until next month. It's getting that time again where I have to start putting together the BEST OF NEGATIVE BURN: YEAR TWO, so if anyone out there has any suggestions and want to share with me their personal picks for YEAR TWO drop them in the mail to me as soon as possible. I'd be happy to hear what all you readers have to say on this subject. Remember YEAR TWO consists of stories from issues #13-24, so get those letters, postcards, or e-mail to me now!




"IT'S JUST A GREAT PIECE OF WORK. THE CHARACTERIZATION IN THIS BOOK IS SO MUCH BETTER THAN SO MANY COMICS. IT'S DEFINITELY AN ORIGINAL."
-HERO ILLUSTRATED



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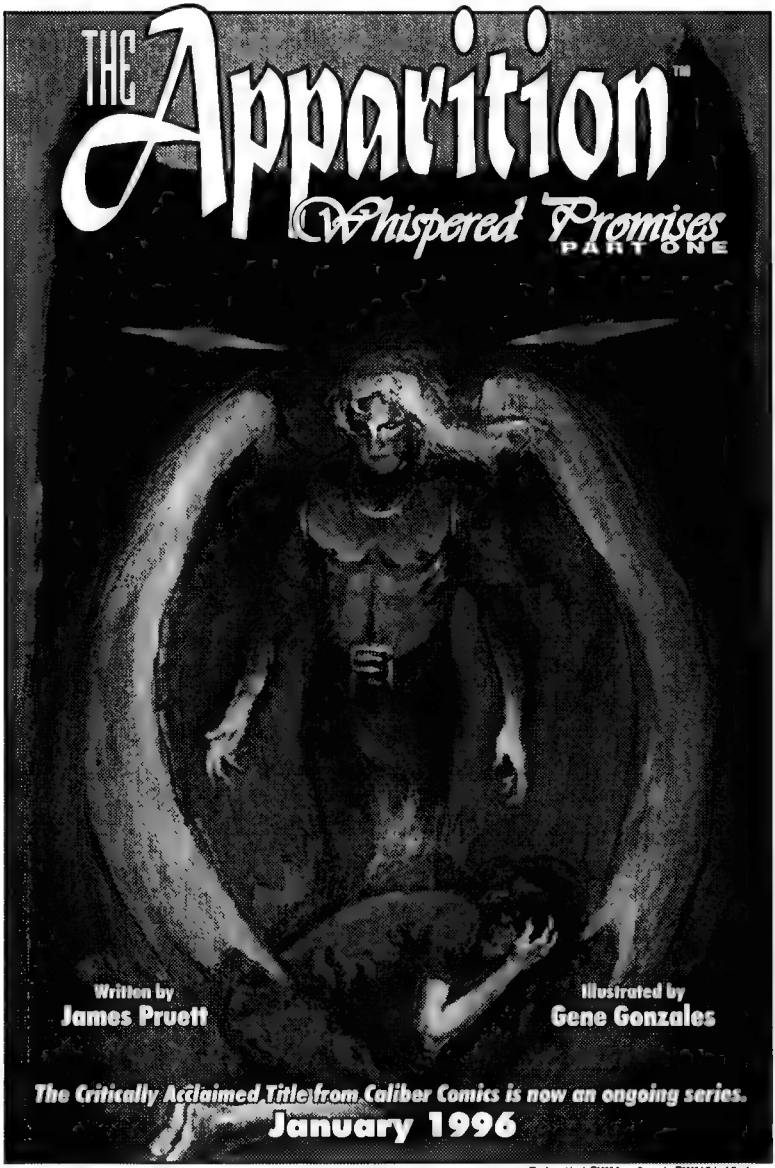
Not every childhood holds pleasant memories.
Not every memory is easily forgotten.



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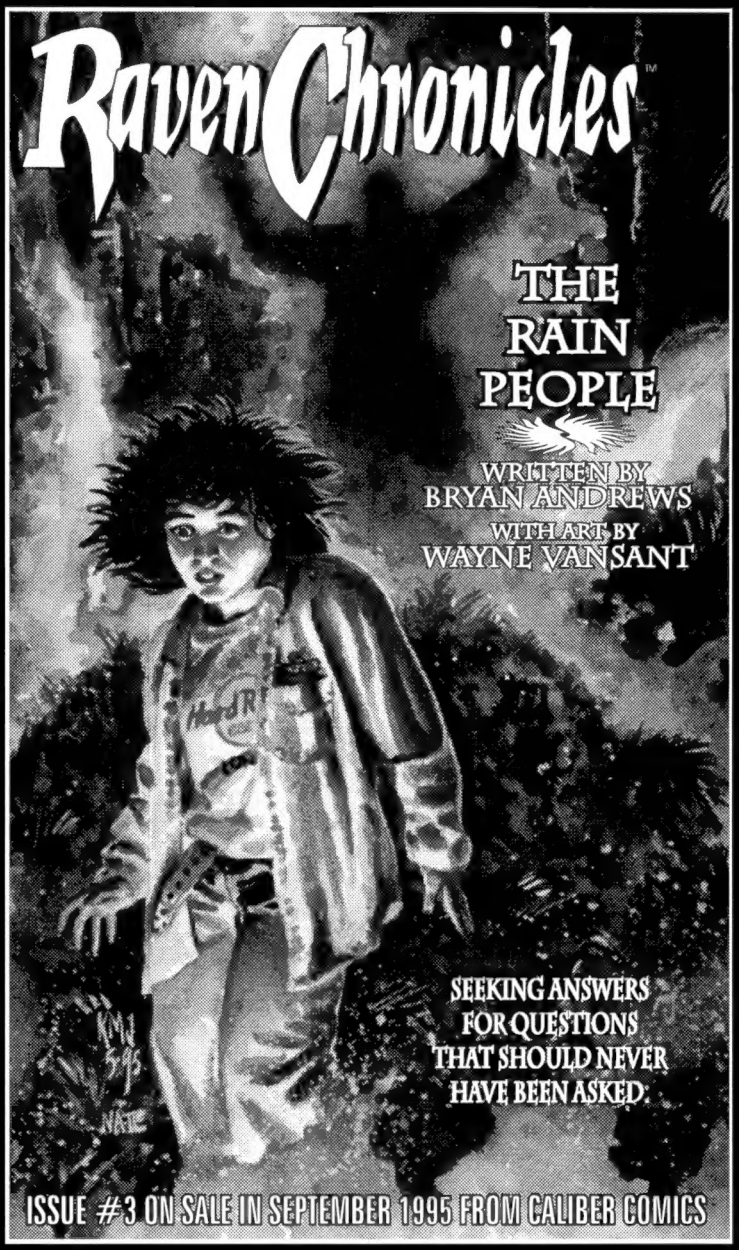
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